

efforts to pull him up by the hair, he fell down. The merciful mother brought his hair back home to hold funeral rites and put it in a box in front of a Buddha image, asking monks to chant scriptures.¹⁰

How great was the mother's compassion! So much that she loved an evil son and practiced good on his behalf. Indeed, we know that an unfilial sin is punished immediately and that an evil deed never goes without a penalty.

4

*On a Contest Between Women of Extraordinary Strength*¹

In the reign of Emperor Shōmu there was a woman of extraordinary strength in Ogawa Market, Katakata district, Mino province 三野國片縣郡小川市.² She was large, and her name was Mino no kitsune 三野狐³ (the fourth generation of the one whose mother was Mino no kitsune). Her strength equaled that of one hundred men. Living within the marketplace of Ogawa and taking pride in her strength, she used to rob passing merchants of their goods by force.

At that time there was another woman of great strength in the village of Katawa, Aichi district, Owari province 尾張國愛智郡片輪里.⁴ She was small (a granddaughter of the Venerable Dōjō who once lived at Gangō-ji).⁵ As she heard that Mino no kitsune robbed passersby of their goods, she sought to challenge her by loading two hundred and fifty bushels⁶ of clams on a boat, and anchoring next to the market. In addition, she prepared and loaded on a boat twenty pliable vine whips.

Kitsune came to the boat, seized all the clams, and had them sold. "Where did you come from?" she asked the owner of the clams, but she got no reply. She repeated the question, but again got no answer. After Kitsune had repeated the same question four times, the owner answered, "I don't know where I came from." Kitsune, insulted, rose

10. See Chap. II(2)b, for the significance of this story.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XXIII, 17). This is a part of the Venerable Dōjō cycle (see I.2, 3; II.27). See above, Chap. II(2)b, for the significance of women who inherited extraordinary strength.

2. According to Takeda, it is the market located at present Gifu-shi 岐阜市.

3. See I.2.

4. See I.2, n. 9.

5. See I.3, n. 3.

6. In Japanese measurement, fifty *koku* 斛 (石). One *koku* is ten to 斗, and one hundred *shō* 升.

Kusakabe no Matoji 日下部眞吉.⁴ In the reign of Emperor Shōmu he was appointed a frontier soldier⁵ at Tsukushi 筑紫 by Ōtomo 大伴 (his name is unknown)⁷ and had to spend three years there. His mother accompanied him and lived with him, while his wife stayed behind to take care of the house.

Ōmaro, out of love for his wife who had been left behind, thought up the wicked idea of killing his mother and returning home to his wife, claiming exemption from duty on the pretext of mourning.⁸ As his mother's mind was set on doing good, he said to her, "There will be a great meeting for a week's lecture on the *Hoke-kyō* 法華經 in the eastern mountain. Shall we go to hear the teaching?"

His mother, deceived, was eager to go, and, devoutly purifying herself in a hot bath, accompanied her son to the mountain. Then he looked at her fiercely, as though with the eyes of a bull, and said, "You, kneel down on the ground!" Gazing at his face, she said, "Why are you talking like that? Are you possessed by a fiend?" The son, however, drew a sword to kill her. Kneeling down in front of her son, she said to him, "We plant a tree in order to get its fruit and to take shelter in its shade."⁹ We bring up children in order to get their help and to depend on them. What on earth has driven you so crazy! I feel as though the tree I have been depending on has suddenly ceased to protect me from the rain." He would not listen to her, so she sorrowfully took off her clothes, put them in three piles, knelt down, and told him her last wish: "Will you wrap up these clothes for me? One pile goes to you, my eldest son, one to my second son, and one to my third son."

When the wicked son stepped forward to cut off his mother's head, the earth opened to swallow him. At that moment his mother grabbed her falling son by the hair and appealed to Heaven, wailing, "My child is possessed by some spirit and driven to such an evil deed. He is out of his mind. I beseech you to forgive his sin." In spite of all her

4. Kusakabe is a family name (see I.18, n. 7), and Matoji is a given name which originated in the common noun, meaning "legal wife."

5. 前守 (崎守, 防人) *sakimori*; soldiers sent to Tsukushi (present-day Kyūshū) to defend the country from a possible invasion by foreign troops from Korea or China. They had three years' duty there and were not allowed to bring any family member. See *Ryō no gige*, "Gunbō-ryō," Articles 8, 27.

6. The Ōtomos were traditionally in charge of military matters and served the emperors as imperial guards. Cf. *Nihon shoki*, *Kojiki*, etc.

7. The compiler's note.

8. The mourning period for parents was one year, during which people were exempted from any labor duties. (See *Ryō no gige*, "Fueki-ryō," Article 21). However, "Gunbō-ryō," Article 28, prescribes that the mourning period should be observed after soldiers have fulfilled their tour of duty.

9. *Daihatsu nehan-gyō*, XXI (*Taishō*, XII, 493). 如人種樹 爲得蔭涼 爲得花果 及以材木.

to hit her. Thereupon the other woman seized Kitsune's two hands and whipped her once. The whip cut the flesh. Then she used another whip which also cut the flesh. Presently ten whips had cut the flesh.

Kitsune said, "I give up! I am sorry for what I have done." The other woman, whose strength was obviously greater than Kitsune's, insisted, "From now on you shall not live in this market. If you dare do so, I will beat you to death." Completely subdued, Kitsune did not live in the market or steal again, and people in the market rejoiced over the restoration of peace.

There has always been someone in the world with great physical power. Indeed, we know such power is attained as a result of causes in past lives.⁷

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On Gaining an Immediate Penalty for Sacrificing Oxen to a Pagan Deity and the Merit of Good Deeds of Freeing Living Beings¹

In the village of Nadekubo, Higashinari district, Settsu province 攝津國東生郡撫田村,² there was a wealthy householder, whose name is unknown. In the reign of ex-Emperor Shōmu, the householder, fearful of the evil influence of a Chinese deity,³ held services for seven years, sacrificing an ox each year until he had killed seven.⁴ At the end of seven years he contracted a serious disease, and, during the following seven years, neither doctor nor medicine could cure him. He called diviners⁵ to purify and pray for him, but his disease became worse. Then it occurred to him that his serious disease must have been caused by his past deeds of killing; after that he never failed in keeping the precepts and freeing living beings on the six holy days of each month.⁶ When he saw someone killing living beings, he would buy

them without asking their price, and he would send for living beings to buy and set them free.

When he was dying at the end of the seven years, he said to his family, "Don't cremate my corpse after I die, but keep it for nine days."⁷ After his death they did as he had told them, waiting for the promised day. When nine days had passed, he came back to life and told this story:

"There were seven subhumans,⁸ each with the head of an ox and a human body. They bound me by the hair and led me along under guard. In front of us there appeared a towering palace. I asked, 'What palace is this?' but they only gave me a terrifying look and said, 'Go on quickly!'

"When we entered the palace gate, they said, 'We have brought him.' I realized that they were addressing King Yama.⁹ He asked them, 'Is this man the enemy who killed you?' In reply, they said, 'Yes, he is the one.' Presently they brought a chopping board and knife and said, 'Hurry and pass sentence on him! We are going to chop him up and eat him the way he did us!'

"At that moment ten million men suddenly appeared to unbind me, saying, 'This man is not accountable for that accusation, for he killed them to make offerings to the evil deity which had haunted him.' Thereupon the seven subhumans and ten million men fought over me every day like water and fire. The king refrained from judging me. The subhumans continued to argue, saying, 'It is evident that this person was the host who cut off our limbs, held the service at the shrine¹⁰ for his own benefit, and chopped us up to eat.' The ten million men, on the other hand, appealed to the king, saying, 'We know very well that the deity is to blame, and not this man. Remember, Your Majesty, that truth has more witnesses.'¹¹

"Eight days passed in this way, and on the evening of the eighth day I was told to appear at court the following day. On the ninth day I went to the court as I had been told. Presently the king said to me, 'As most of our judgments are formed by what witnesses say, we side

7. The compiler's attempt to make native legends put on Buddhist clothing is obvious in the victory of the Venerable Dōjō's descendants over the descendants of the fox, and in the ascribing of strength to the ancestor's merit.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XX, 15).

2. Present Higashinari-ku, Ōsaka-shi 大阪市東成區.

3. 漢神.

4. Animal sacrifice was foreign to Japan. See *Shoku Nihongi*, XL (Enryaku 10:9:5).

5. 卜者 *kamagiri*; see Chap. II(3)a, n. 124.

6. 六節 *rokusetsu* probably means 六齋日 *rokukusanichi*, six holy days: 8, 14, 15, 23, 29, and 30 of each month, when lay Buddhists keep the first eight of the ten precepts and devote themselves to doing good.

7. Common people were buried within a day after their death. See Chap. II(3)a. Cf. *Nihon shoki* (Taika 2:3:22); Aston, "Nihongi," II, 219.

8. 非人 *hinin*.

9. 閻羅王 *Enraō*; see Chap. II(1)c.

10. 廟 *byō* (Ch. *miào*), Chinese temple or shrine.

11. The other possible interpretation is: "We know very well that the deity is to blame, and not this man." The king thought that the truth was on the side of the majority of witnesses. 我等委曲知非此人咎 識鬼神咎 王自思惟 理就多證.